



LIVE

TRUMP SUPPORTERS IN ARMED STANDOFF WITH POLICE INSIDE US CAPITOL - REPORTS

[Home](#) / [Op-ed](#) /

Plans on ice: Freezers & logistics are the reasons Pfizer's vaccine is all hype, and won't be a magic bullet

12 Nov, 2020 19:50



Pfizer's new vaccine sent the stock market soaring this week © Reuters

360

Follow RT on

Google News

By **Peter Andrews**, Irish science journalist and writer based in London. He has a background in the life sciences, and graduated from the University of Glasgow with a degree in genetics.

The announcement on Monday that the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid vaccine was 90% effective injected rocket fuel into the stock market and hope into hearts everywhere. But the vaccine's cold-storage requirements present huge problems.

Immediately after the announcement, politicians **began** falling over themselves to hand fat checks over to the Big Pharma giants, hoping that the news would inspire hope in their public. Many parts of the media treated it likewise as a crushing blow to the coronavirus; the Economist **called** it "the beginning of the end." But not everyone shares their optimism. Concerns are emerging about how practical the Pfizer vaccine could be, requiring as it does hugely expensive supporting equipment.

Straight from the fridge

The Pfizer vaccine uses messenger RNA (mRNA) to combat the virus, an advanced genetic therapy that uses the virus' own genetic material against it. Because mRNA is in a sense a living molecule, the vaccines have to be constantly kept at extremely low temperatures: -70 degrees Celsius or -94 Fahrenheit to be exact. And that is the maximum: ideally they would be even cooler.

This takes freezers. Big, expensive ones, and lots of them at that. The vaccine can only be **stored** in a normal refrigerator, like one you would have in your kitchen, for five days prior to use. After that they spoil, but the boffins are currently working to extend that period to two weeks. Opening the freezer as little as possible also helps.

ALSO ON RT.COM**Flu away: Scientists baffled at disappearance of influenza... but is it really gone, or just masked by Covid-19?**

While initial reactions were white hot, many health policy makers seem to be going cold on the idea of Pfizer's vaccine. This [report](#) outlines how the East Asian nations, especially the poorer ones like Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines, are not keen on the idea of splashing out for God knows how many giant freezers which would have to survive journeys to remote communities in difficult terrain or on distant islands. Not to mention the weather, which in warmer climes will make the energy demands even greater.

But it is not just the poor countries that are worried. South Korea and Japan [claim](#) to not currently have the cold storage space for a Pfizer-type vaccine. If this is how Asian countries are reacting – countries that were widely praised for their technological approach to handling the outbreak – how could this work in Latin America and Africa?

In fact, even the most sophisticated American hospitals in big cities have nothing like the capacity to store Pfizer vaccines. And [according](#) to one publication, nothing less than “a gigantic new network of freezers” will do.

ALSO ON RT.COM

The healthcare system isn't interested in anything other than Covid... not even lung cancer

Dry ice

Pfizer themselves [claim](#) to have “developed packaging and storage innovations to be fit for purpose for the range of locations where we believe vaccinations will take place.” Apparently it involves using dry ice to transport the vaccine by land and air. That is all very well in theory, but again, it is difficult to look past the scale of military-style operation this sort of thing would entail.

But with problems this complicated, the true scale of the challenge will not become apparent until it has begun. Governments, at least in Western Europe, have a tendency to [spend](#) money first and ask questions later when it comes to fancy equipment. The Irish government, for example, last year [spent](#) over €2 million on a single printer for their parliamentary buildings. If that is anything to go by, perhaps they will splurge on the freezers.

ALSO ON RT.COM

The TB vaccine may provide some protection against Covid and could even be the silver bullet we need to end restrictions

Big Pharma wars

Politicians are absolutely right to be expressing these concerns about the logistical nightmare the Pfizer vaccine appears to present. Any vaccination programme is a massive undertaking, but Covid vaccines in particular have a host of additional challenges baked in. The [accelerated](#) timeline they are being developed at, the [confusion](#) over who is to be served first and the [apparent](#) lack of enthusiasm from the public for even getting them at all.

One former Big Pharma honcho was particularly [scathing](#) about the way in which Pfizer announced their early results. He called it “a cynical and egregious marketing ploy by Pfizer to get early orders” and said that Pfizer “know that mass vaccination with a vaccine that needs storage at -80 degrees is completely unworkable.” It should be noted that this is a former director of rival firm GSK, and so there may be some company pride at stake. But he is certainly not alone, as many experts are doubtful that a large roll out of this vaccine is at all feasible.

All of this said, it looks like Pfizer's boss has done [just fine](#) from the announcement.

Think your friends would be interested? Share this story!

The statements, views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of RT.

OPED

360

Trends: [Coronavirus in UK news](#), [Coronavirus in USA news](#), [Covid-19 coronavirus news](#)



FOLLOW RT ON INSTAGRAM



FOLLOW RT ON INSTAGRAM

'This is disputed': Twitter's obsessive tagging of Trump election posts spawns meme response

EU Brexit negotiator Barnier mocked & cheered after tweeting picture of himself on a 'level playing field'

Subscribe to RT newsletter to get stories the mainstream media won't tell you

E-mail

Subscribe

FROM OUR PARTNERS

Model, photographer arrested after pyramid shoot in Egypt

Prince Azim of Brunei, Sultan of Brunei's Son, Dies Aged 38

New York GOP congresswomen blast Nancy Pelosi's new House gender rules

Podcasts

[All podcasts](#)

[Boom Bust: Saudi Arabia & Russia clash over oil output](#)



RT

Boom Bust: Saudi A...

 SOUNDCLLOUDDid Pres. Trump "Pressure" GA Official "Find" Votes? Pelosi Speaker Again?

RT

Did Pres. Trump "Pr...

 SOUNDCLLOUD

6.1.2021

Plans on ice: Freezers & logistics are the reasons Pfizer's vaccine is all hype, and won't be a magic bullet — RT Op-ed

WATCH shopping mall in Russia engulfed in flames during MASSIVE BLAZE

British police 'ignored and even criminalized' injured BLM protestors with 'institutionally racist' tactics — report

'They go to the hottest spots': Americans shocked to learn Doctors Without Borders helping with Covid-19 relief in US

UK hit by 'highly infectious' bird flu as govt declares national prevention zone to halt spread

Pay 5% more tax to work from home after Covid has passed? You've gotta be joking...

OUCH! Cyclist hospitalized with body covered in SPIKES after agonizing crash into CACTUS (VIDEO)

UK man jailed for stabbing female chess opponent with kitchen knife in drunken row

Obama blasts Trump in new book: He took advantage of Americans 'spooked by a black man in the White House'

Trump looks like he's toast, so who's going to take the reins and lead the Republican fightback for 2024?

WATCH: Researchers create virtual reality forests to make danger of climate change 'more visceral experience'

Vindication or nothingburger? Old tweet resurfaces showing Biden's chief of staff pick saying US elections are 'rigged'

Teachers in Norway say they're afraid to show Prophet Mohammed cartoons to students, and worry about personal consequences

Worth a shot: Scientists discover way to quickly clear alcohol from blood by... breathing

As Florida plans green light for store owners to shoot looters, gunfights at high noon may become the new American reality

Six years after Maidan, most Ukrainians think relations with Russia will improve & majority are opposed to joining NATO — poll

Trump has 2 months left to attack Iran, and here's why he might

Leading tech companies call for tougher antitrust action against Google

Facebook-owned apps, including WhatsApp and Instagram used in over half of online grooming cases in England and Wales

العربيةESPPYCDEFR



RT News App

News	Op-ed	Live	Terms of Use
USA	Shows	Applications	Privacy policy
UK	Projects	Where to watch	About us
Russia	RT Play	Schedule	Contact info
Business	Podcasts	Sponsored content	Feedback & Complaints
Sport		On-Air Talent	Vacancies



© Autonomous Nonprofit Organization “TV-Novosti”, 2005–2021. All rights reserved.

Add to home screen